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Admiral Pays Midshipmen A Visit

CIA Chief Warns Trial Would Be Damaging

By Robert Timberg

Annapolis—The head of the Central Intelligence Agency warned last night that the agency would have to release secrets damaging to national security if one of his predecessors is brought to trial.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, the CIA director, issued his warning during an appearance before the 4,300-member Brigade of Midshipman at the Naval Academy.

Admiral Turner was referring to the case of Richard M. Helms, former director of central intelligence, who allegedly lied when he told a Senate committee in 1973 the agency had played no role in bringing about the overthrow of the Marxist government of Salvador Allende in Chile.

It later came to light that the CIA had spent some \$8 million to weaken the Allende regime.

A federal grand jury in Washington is reportedly considering indicting Mr. Helms for perjury, but the final decision on whether to try him now rests with Griffin Bell, the Attorney General.

Asked last night by a midshipman if a trial of Mr. Helms would create serious intelligence problems, Admiral Turner replied:

"If Mr. Helms comes up for public trial, we, the CIA, will have to release information, the release of which will be damaging to the national security interests.

"Therefore, a decision must be made by the Attorney General of the United States as to whether the overall national interests will be furthered by prosecuting this case . . . or to waive the trial in order to preserve the secrets."

Admiral Turner said he has already made a recommendation on the matter, but he refused to reveal it. He also failed to characterize the nature and magnitude of the threat to national security which a trial of Mr. Helms would pose.

The final decision, he said, will have to weigh his views against "the good that would be done by prosecuting."

"I have made my views known on how damaging it would be," he said.

Admiral Turner, who graduated from the academy in 1946 with President Carter, was named director of central intelligence in February. His powers were expanded in August to give him budget authority and task-setting responsibility for the entire intelligence community.

He was hit by a barrage of questions concerning illegal buggings and political assassinations following a 30-minute speech last night in which he reminisced about his days at Annapolis and told the midshipman they must think boldly about their future and the Navy's if they're to meet future challenges.

He drew sustained applause when he said, in response to a question concerning assassinations, "We will not do it and have no thoughts or plans to do it."

Concerning electronic surveillance, he said the agency will "comply with the law precisely, minutely and absolutely."